Digital Marketing Institute

CONTENT MARKETING

Study Notes

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

Content Marketing

LESSON 1: CONTENT MARKETING CONCEPTS AND STRATEGY 7

CONTENT MARKETING 8

What is it? 8

Benefits 8

CONTENT INTENT 8

Stages of the buyer's journey 8

Effective content 9

TOPICAL AND EVERGREEN CONTENT 10

CONTENT MARKETING STRATEGY 12

What is it? 12

LESSON 2: DEVELOPING A CONTENT MARKETING PLAN 15

CONTENT GOALS 16

Content marketing goals 16

Key considerations 17

BUYER PERSONAS 17

What are they? 17

Purpose 18

Key considerations 18

Best practices 18

Key steps 19

WALKTHROUGH: DMI PERSONA BUILDER 19

LESSON 3: USING CONTENT RESEARCH TO FIND OPPORTUNITIES 22

SOCIAL LISTENING 23

What is it? 23

Benefits 23

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

WALKTHROUGH: SPARKTORO CONTENT INSIGHTS 24
COMPETITOR ANALYSIS 24
The value of competitor monitoring 24
Key considerations 24
Competitor analysis tools 24
WALKTHROUGH: GOOGLE ALERTS 25
CONTENT TOPICS 25
Keyword research 25
The creative brief 26
WALKTHROUGH: KEYWORD RESEARCH FOR CONTENT IDEAS 27
BRAND STORYTELLING 27
What is a brand? 27
What is brand storytelling? 28
Key considerations 28
DEFINING YOUR PERSONALITY 29
Brand personality 29
Categories 29
LESSON 4: CREATING AND CURATING CONTENT 31
CONTENT CREATION 32
What is it? 32
Being creative 32
Key steps 32
CONTENT TYPES 32
Formats 32
Benefits of having a content mix 33
Best practice for content creation 33
Sharing content 34

 Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

Images 34
Infographics 35
Video 35
Headline writing 36
Blogs 36
Best practices for writing content 36
CONTENT CURATION 37
What is it? 37
Benefits 37
Types of curation 37
Finding content 37
Curation versus creation 38
WALKTHROUGH: LINKEDIN COMPANY PAGE CONTENT CURATION 38
CONTENT REPURPOSING 38
What is it? 38
Benefits 38
Key considerations 39
CONTENT PERSONALIZATION 39
What is it? 39
Benefits 39
How can you give your content that personal touch? 39
CONTENT CALENDARS 40
What are they? 40
Benefits 40
Elements 40
Key considerations 40
CONTENT PLATFORMS 40

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

LESSON 5: PUBLISHING AND DISTRIBUTING CONTENT 43
CONTENT SEEDING 44
What is it? 44
Benefits 44
Steps for seeding content 44
CONTENT SCHEDULING 44
Types of scheduling 44
Benefits 45
CONTENT PROMOTION 45
What is it? 45
Paid methods 45
Unpaid methods 45
COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT 46
An important complement 46
Why is it important? 46
Methods 46
LESSON 6: METRICS AND CONTENT MARKETING 48
CONTENT MARKETING KPI MEASUREMENT 49
Value of KPI measurement 49
Benefits of measuring content 49
CAMPAIGN METRICS 49
Engagement metrics 49
Conversion metrics 49
ANALYZING CONTENT PERFORMANCE 50
Choosing metrics 50
Steps to derive insights 50
Determining return on investment (ROI) 50

 Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

Presenting the findings 51

LESSON 7: ENHANCING YOUR CREATIVITY 53

GENERATING NEW IDEAS 54

Thinking creatively 54

Creative thinking stages 54

REMOVING BARRIERS TO CREATIVITY 55

Barriers 55

Tactics to remove barriers 55

PERSEVERING WHEN YOUR IDEAS FAIL 57

Importance of persevering 57

Overcoming rejection 57

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

LESSON 1: CONTENT MARKETING CONCEPTS AND STRATEGY

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

CONTENT MARKETING

What is it?

The internet is essentially made up of content. If we step back from our screens, we can see that the internet is simply a means to navigate content, words, text, opinions, images, and videos.

Consumers (B2C) and businesses (B2B) are searching for and engaging with content all the time, so **content marketing** is an opportunity for organizations to create the type of content that people want. The marketing element can be seen as a strategic way to create content with the aim of building brands and educating customers to the benefits of your products and services.

Content marketing drives valuable search traffic and email and social media engagement to increase the number of valuable actions taken by your target audience. It begins a relationship, a familiarity and trust as you repeatedly show up when people search online for information or just to be entertained.

Benefits

Why should you use content marketing in your digital strategy? Here are some of the key ways it will help:

- **Grow awareness** of your brand or business.
- **Recruit advocates** of your brand.
- Increase and **improve search engine** rankings, or SEO.
- **Generate new business leads**, nurture sales prospects, and convert customers.
- **Enhance understanding** of your business proposition.

Content marketing is not just about promoting your business or brand. It's about forging a long-term relationship of trust and familiarity with people.

CONTENT INTENT

Stages of the buyer's journey

Always make sure that your content has a clear intention. Consumers can easily spot a lack of intention, and when they do, they won't react to your content.

Let's look at the ways in which the intentions align with the traditional sales funnel.

- **Awareness:** Let potential customers know why you exist, what you stand for, and your unique selling points compared to competitors. Tell them what you do, how you do it, and how you can solve a problem for your customers.
- **Interest:** Capture the audience's attention beyond awareness and convince them of your proposition.
- **Consideration:** Give further detail on what you do to inform customers about your expertise, price, and other happy customers. Show why customers should choose you over your competitors – demonstrate your experience, customer testimonials, and expert knowledge. Always ask yourself, "What do customers need to know to help them say 'yes' to choosing your brand?" This is the consideration content you will need to create.

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

- **Conversion:** Foster an enticing and personalized experience between your customers and your business. This includes lead nurturing, adding value, managing customer expectations, clear terms of service, requesting feedback, and community management.
- **Retention:** Encourage repeat business but also highlight positive customer experiences for new potential customers. This involves celebrating champion customers and showcasing user generated content (UGC) through your content marketing channels.

Effective content

When creating content for your content marketing efforts, it's important to remember that the purpose of this content is to convince your audiences and convert them into customers.

Let's take a look at some qualities of highly effective content for your content marketing mix.

Relevant

In order to be truly effective, your content needs to be **relevant**.

If you can't see why a customer would engage with a piece of content, or how it helps drive your business agenda, then it may not be worth creating.

It's good to sense check your content against your business objectives and audience expectations.

Always ask yourself:

- Why am I creating this?
- What business outcome is it likely to deliver?
- Why would my audience engage with this content?
- What are they likely to do after engaging?

Asking questions like this will help determine the value of the content you're creating by aligning it to business and audience needs.

Personalized

It's important to create content that is **personalized**.

Create content that speaks to your audience at that moment and time, that is relevant to their personal outlook on life, or addresses their pain points. Creating content that serves a personal purpose will have a huge impact on creating a bond and building trust with your intended customers.

Valuable

The content needs to be **valuable**.

If your content is useful, educational, or entertaining to your audience in some way, it is valuable to them and will resonate with them and they will be more likely to convert or even promote your content.

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

Addresses needs

It's also important to create content that **addresses the buyer's needs or interests**.

Customers will have questions about why they should go with your offering and those questions need to be addressed proactively to help them make up their mind. It should be relevant to the cultural context of your audiences, and you should be looking to see what problems your content can help solve for your target audience.

Includes a CTA

Effective content always has a **call-to-action (or CTA)**.

Your customers and potential audience need to know what action to take when they see your content. Giving people a clear CTA allows them to understand exactly what you're selling or promoting and brings them on a journey through the conversion funnel towards purchase or action.

Presents solution

Your content must demonstrate that your business is the solution, and that you have a unique selling point (USP).

Content that **presents a solution** to the pain points of your audience will build your reputation as a brand that is reliable and can be trusted. When customers trust a brand, they will do more business with it so it's worth investing in content that drives trust between your customers and your brand to drive more sales over time.

TOPICAL AND EVERGREEN CONTENT

Broadly speaking, we can group content into two broad categories:

- topical content
- evergreen content

Both types have benefits when it comes to creating content for your digital marketing efforts.

Topical content

Topical content is newsworthy, time-sensitive content that is linked to a topic and is best suited to a particular moment in time.

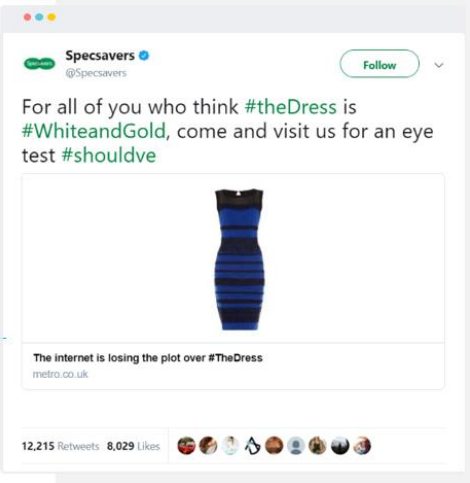
Basically, it is relevant to what's happening in the world right now. It's important to note that because topical content is tied to a moment in time, it has a shorter lifespan than evergreen content.

Examples of formats used for topical content include:

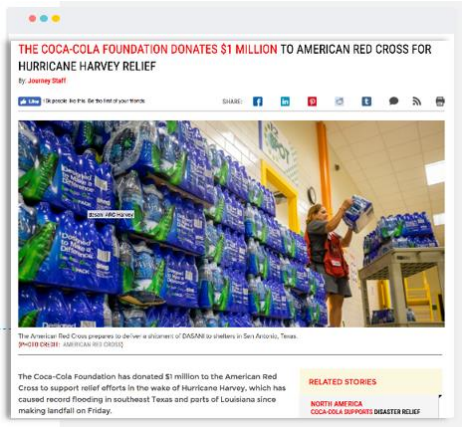
- short written pieces
- tweets and social media posts
- memes, videos, and images

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

Here are two examples of great topical content.


Specsavers
@Specsavers
Follow
For all of you who think #theDress is #WhiteandGold, come and visit us for an eye test #shouldve
The internet is losing the plot over #TheDress
metro.co.uk
12,215 Retweets 8,029 Likes

In the first example, Specsavers, an optician brand, created topical content around the time of 'The Dress'. The Dress, of course, was the social media phenomenon that sparked countless online debates – was the dress in the image blue and black, or white and gold? It was a nice way to interact with something that was topical, which earned the brand huge kudos.


THE COCA-COLA FOUNDATION DONATES $1 MILLION TO AMERICAN RED CROSS FOR HURRICANE HARVEY RELIEF
The Coca-Cola Foundation has donated $1 million to the American Red Cross to support relief efforts in the wake of Hurricane Harvey, which has caused record flooding in southeast Texas and parts of Louisiana since making landfall on Friday.
RELATED STORIES

On a more serious note, Coca-Cola created topical content around the time Hurricane Harvey hit, and talked about their corporate social responsibility strategy in donating $1 million to the American Red Cross fund for hurricane relief.

Evergreen content

Evergreen content is content that can be used at various stages of the buyer's journey.

Evergreen content has a longer lifespan and is generally of high value, allowing you to drive conversions and brand affinity over a longer period of time as people will always be looking for this kind of 'timeless' content. This also means that evergreen content can be repurposed into different formats, maximizing your content creation time and efforts.

Examples of formats used for evergreen content include:

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

- ‘how-to’ articles
- video tutorials
- beginner’s guides
- FAQs
- case studies
- list articles
- checklists

CONTENT MARKETING STRATEGY

What is it?

A content marketing strategy is an ever-evolving plan that outlines your content marketing goals and target audience.

- It **determines the content needs of your target audience**.
- It **defines their user journey, content formats, and content styling**.
- It **aligns to business objectives**, and it is fully integrated with the wider business.
- It is ‘ever-evolving’ and **should always be tweaked and modified** to adapt to changes in the market and how people are consuming your content.
- A content marketing strategy is essential for quality content marketing as it **sets out the objectives and scope of your project**. Your strategy will help you to keep everything on track while providing a roadmap for execution of the different aspects in the strategy.

Developing a content marketing strategy is a **cyclical process** that evolves when the data and performance indicate that you need to adapt your content in relation to your marketing goals. Moving through a complete content strategy process will help you create meaningful content for your target audience. This will also allow you to apply learnings from one phase of the campaign to another and to optimize future campaigns.

Content Strategy

It's important for content marketers to work with the wider team around them to define:

- What content is created
- What purpose it’s serving to the overall business goals
- How effective it is in helping achieve those goals.

Your content strategy aims to communicate your brand or campaign messaging across different creative assets and channels, so consistency is important so people will recognize it as your brand’s content.

Creative Strategy

Your creative strategy sets out your messaging and tone to be applied to all creative assets and content pieces, such as:

- website creative
- email templates
- promotional videos
- banner ads for digital display and social media

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

- offline creative pieces like TV, radio, or print

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

NOTES

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

LESSON 2: DEVELOPING A CONTENT MARKETING PLAN

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

CONTENT GOALS

Content marketing goals

We're going to look at some content goals for your content marketing.

Awareness

This focuses on content such as social media posts, banner ads, videos, and images that let people know about your brand, promotions, products, or services by driving visibility with your target audience.

Effectiveness of awareness content is largely measured in impressions, number of people reached, and number of searches for your brand online.

Consideration

This involves content such as blogs, demonstration videos or specifications that outline product benefits and features. Product specifications help your audience to make up their mind and choose your product when they are looking to buy, engage in a sales conversation or take another action.

Consideration content can be measured by looking at the number and quality of comments, shares, likes, and replies – in other words, anything that elicits a response from your target audience.

Conversion

The focus here is on content such as digital advertising, lead magnets, and purchase landing pages that drive users towards ecommerce or lead generation areas of your website or business. The purpose of this content is to build on the effectiveness of your awareness and consideration content, and get the valuable action over the line. In many cases, it is the last point before a potential customer makes an eCommerce purchase or completes a lead generation form.

When you look at your landing pages always ask yourself: “What does the customer need to see or read to convince them to press the ‘Buy’ button, or whatever CTA you have on your page that drives towards conversion? What content will convince them to take action?

Conversion content can be measured by tracking the number of sales or leads that you receive via this conversion content.

Note: A lead magnet is when a person enters their contact details into a web form on a website in return for something from the company. Examples of lead magnets include eBooks, free trials of a product, access to a webinar, podcast, or video content. When a company is giving away valuable content for free, people will give their contact details in return for access to these pieces of content. The details are passed on as a lead, so the company's sales team can then follow up with the person and try to sell their products or services to them.

Affinity

Affinity goal-focused content can include all content types and is associated with brand building and driving positive affinity and connections to attract new customers, or retain existing customers.

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

Affinity content can be measured by ranking social media engagement through reactions, comments, and feedback signals in terms of positive or negative sentiment towards your brand or organization.

Advocacy

Advocacy goals are a continuation of affinity goals and affect all content types associated with retaining existing customers. When people have a positive affinity towards your brand or company, not only can you retain them as customers, but they may also go on to be your brand champions or advocates and recommend you to their contacts.

Advocacy is determined by measuring ongoing positive engagement, user generated content, reviews, ratings, and recommendations. In many cases, customers will create content on your behalf, like an unboxing video or a testimonial, as well as social media shares and comments that include their own personal endorsement.

Key considerations

There are some key factors to bear in mind when aligning your content marketing goals to your overall business goals:

- **Consistency:** Ensure that there is a high level of consistency in language, appearance, and messaging across all of your content, in line with other marketing materials.
- **Timing:** Consider how your content marketing activities can help support other campaigns the business is running.
- **Input:** Get buy-in and encourage input and ideas from the wider business including PR, Communications, HR, Legal, Product, and Finance.
- **Website:** Assess how content marketing impacts your website content, structure, SEO goals, and ecommerce conversions and whether there are any improvements to be made.

BUYER PERSONAS

What are they?

Buyer personas help you understand your customers and prospective customers better. Once you have decided on your content marketing goals, you need to consider who the people who typically buy from you are, the people you want to market to.

For this, you can create a **buyer persona**. A buyer persona is an imaginary character based on research and data that represents your ideal buyer or target audience.

You can use audience insights to help develop your buyer personas by visualizing who they are and how you can effectively communicate with them.

Monitoring audience insights such as social media platform usage, device usage, time of day that best suits them for consuming content, content needs, and access to high speed internet will help shape your content strategy.

It makes it easier for you to tailor your content, messaging, and tone – as well as product development and services – to the specific needs, behaviors, and concerns of your target audience.

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

Purpose

Understanding the purpose of a buyer persona is an important part of content marketing:

- **Targeting:** Targeting helps to position your products as relevant and worthy of consideration. It provides you with valuable insights for conveying your message, performing market research, targeting advertising, website design, usability testing and keywords for SEO.
- **Format:** Looking at the individual creative and digital formats that your target audience consumes gives you the information and perspective you need to make objective decisions about how to craft your brand messages through the most consumed and widely accepted formats. This allows you to create compelling content. Personas also help determine the platforms and media you use. You can create content to meet the targeted needs of each buyer persona profile and address the needs of each persona.
- **Discovery:** Discovering the channels your audiences are inhabiting allows you to get a grasp of your audience's channel behavior. Where are they having conversations? This allows you to truly tailor your brand messages so you can get the best possible response by positioning content at the most relevant touchpoints for your audience.

Key considerations

Develop a buyer persona using the following key considerations:

- **Objectives:** What are they looking to achieve by interacting with your business? How many competitors will they consider? What information is pertinent to their decision?
- **Location:** Where are they from? Where are they based? This will include cultural considerations.
- **Demographic:** How old are they? What is their gender?
- **Job details:** What is their economic position or job role?
- **Platforms:** What are their main sources of information? Which online platforms do they inhabit? Which resources do they consult when making decisions? How influential are each of these?
- **Devices:** What are they using to access the internet? What is their browser speed and are there any connectivity considerations to consider?
- **Purchase behaviors:** What is their path to purchase? What steps do they take when considering a purchase?
- **Interests**: What issues are they trying to solve? How do these issues impact on their lives? What are the benefits of solving these challenges?

NOTE: You can get most of this information from social, search and site analytics but some of those specific questions may require you to conduct some primary research like interviews, focus groups or surveys.

Best practices

The following steps are best practices for using buyer personas in your content strategy:

1. Prioritize your personas in terms of:
    - how easy it is to reach them online

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

- their value to your business or objective

2. Use your reach/value prioritization to help set budgets for production and allocate resources.

3. Develop creative messaging and creative assets that align to buyer needs, solve their problems, and showcase your business in a useful, authentic way.

4. Choose to distribute the content on the channels and devices buyers use and align your content production outputs to the requirement of these channels.

5. Create the types of content they need at key stages of their purchase journey.

6. Manage internal expectations and set KPIs and timelines for engagement or conversion outcomes by understanding the typical purchase or conversion journey and frequency as detailed in your persona research.

Key steps

Once your content marketing goals and audience personas have been established, you can execute your content marketing plan and launch a campaign.

There are six key steps for creating a content campaign:

1. Use social listening and competitor research to unearth popular content topics.

2. Do keyword research to discover what are people searching for online.

3. Write a creative brief to help guide and brainstorm ideas.

4. Review and agree on content themes and topics for production.

5. Share on website, social media, and email.

6. Review engagement metrics and try to improve performance.

Understanding your personas allows you to get a more complete knowledge of not only their job title but their background. Their needs and interest sets offer up important information on how to access them emotionally, but also illustrate what motivates and frustrates them. This can help you paint a picture of your ideal customer. It's vital to flesh out these personas based on their content and information needs to position your brand or business as the solution to their requirements.

The hardest working customer personas are developed with field research, focus group research, surveys, and interviews with your target audience.

WALKTHROUGH: DMI PERSONA BUILDER

Create target personas using the DMI Persona Builder. To do this, complete the following sections:

1: Company information

- Company name
- Industry
- Primary market location
- Overarching digital marketing objective
- Strategy statement

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

- SMART goals

2: Sales cycles

- Peak sales periods
- Planned special offers/promotions

3: Tools and access

- Website analytics
- Paid channels
- Organic channels

4: Demographics

- Persona name
- Age/gender
- Location
- Income

5: Interests and personal habits

- Likes and dislikes
- Habits and skills

6: Media habits

- Traditional media consumption
- Digital channels
- Research methods
- Trusted resources

7: Buyer behavior

- Stage in purchase journey
- Buyer type
- Reachability
- Persona value

8: Decision

- Buying power
- Monthly/annual spend
- Other decision-makers/stakeholders

Build out your four priority target personas. Then use the summary matrix to discover how they rate against each other, and which ones you should focus on.

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

NOTES

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

LESSON 3: USING CONTENT RESEARCH TO FIND OPPORTUNITIES

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

SOCIAL LISTENING

What is it?

Social listening

Social listening is the process of conducting research into what people think or feel about a brand, product, or topic. It often forms the basis of a content strategy, which will respond to those findings – either by creating content that answers the questions discovered in your research, or addressing undesirable ways that people consider your brand or product. You can gain valuable insights not just from looking at what people are saying about you, but also from what people are saying about the wider business in which you operate.

For example, if you work in Coca-Cola, you might also look at what Pepsi are doing and what people are saying about Pepsi; or indeed, what people are saying about soft drinks as an entire category, as part of your social listening strategy.

Social monitoring

Social monitoring on the other hand is the ongoing method of tracking online conversations in real-time, to pick up mentions and conversation related to your business in a timely manner that gives you the opportunity to react accordingly.

Benefits

Let's look at the benefits of social listening for your content strategy:

- **Identify talking points:** It enables you to identify what people are talking about in relation to your organization or brand.
- **Spot potential risks:** It helps you to spot potential risks in relation to emerging competitors, threats, and negative customer feedback before they become a serious issue.
- **Understand brand sentiment:** It helps you to understand your brand sentiment, business position in the market, and how your brand is perceived.

Competitor monitoring

Competitor monitoring is often just as valuable as social listening for your own brand. Here are some of the benefits you can take advantage of:

- **Define the content that works well** for your competitors' audience and see how it compares to your content, can you see what's working for them and can you do it better?
- **Spot content gaps** by looking at successful competitor content that you don't currently have.
- **Identify innovation** in platform usage by looking at new channels and content types they are using.
- **Avoid clash of content** or ideas by keeping your content unique to your brand or organization.

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

WALKTHROUGH: SPARKTORO CONTENT INSIGHTS

Use SparkToro to find out what type of content resonates with your audience.

- **Step 1**: In the dashboard, select an option from the drop-down menu (for example, “My audience frequently talks about”).
- **Step 2**: Enter a few keywords.
- **Step 3**: Click Search.

SparkToro then provides interesting information about your chosen audience. It can reveal:

- The size of this audience
- The hashtags they use
- The top phrases used in their bios
- What social accounts they are engaging with
- What websites they are on
- What podcasts they listen to
- What YouTube channels they watch

COMPETITOR ANALYSIS

The value of competitor monitoring

Whether you're a B2C brand or a B2B organization, looking at what your competitors are doing is a hugely beneficial way for you to understand what kind of content audiences are interacting with out on the web. Get into the habit of regularly checking out your competitor's social media, website, and email activities to see how they're using content in their channels.

Key considerations

There are some key things to look out for when you do a competitor content audit.

Ask questions like:

- What is their content development schedule?
- How is their customer feedback from and to customers?
- How do their search engine rankings look?
- Are they making use of back links?
- Is their website optimized?
- How is their social following?
- Are they connecting with influences or ambassadors?
- What's their tone of voice and does it work well?
- What new formats and channels are they using?

Competitor analysis tools

There are some great tools out there to help you and your social listening and competitor content analysis.

These include:

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

- TweetDeck
- TweetReach
- BuzzSumo
- SparkToro
- Google Alert
- Fanpage Karma

WALKTHROUGH: GOOGLE ALERTS

Stay on top of brand mentions, competitor mentions, and updates in your industry by using Google Alerts.

- Do a Google search for “google alerts” and navigate to the Google Alerts homepage.
- Enter an alert in the **Create an alert about...** field (for example, enter the words “digital marketing”).
- Select **Show options** and choose how often you want to receive alerts, your preferred source, language, and region, where alerts should be delivered, and so on.
- Click **Create Alert** to create the alert.
- You will receive an email summary of your mentions in due course.

CONTENT TOPICS

Keyword research

Before you set out to create your content topics, it's important to do your research to make sure that the content you're creating is right for your audience. The first place to start is **keyword research**.

Keyword research helps guide your content development. Content marketers can look at the things that people are searching for and the questions that they ask Google. You can then create the content for your website that people are actively looking for, so when they search, your website shows up.

Keyword research allows content marketers to:

- Get the right kind of visitors to your site by creating the content people are actually searching for.
- Identify keywords that have high search volume, helping you to create content that pulls more visitors and potential customers to your website.
- Identify content gaps on your website by comparing new keyword topics to your existing content topics.
- Provide unbiased statistical rationale for creating your content themes.
- Identify new opportunities and stay fresh by using emerging themes and trends based on what people are searching for.

Conducting keyword research

How do you go about doing keyword research?

- Start off by picking a topic.
- Brainstorm ideas about this topic.

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

- Enter your keyword ideas into an SEO keyword tool like Moz or Ahrefs, and find related keywords that people are searching for, search volumes and difficulty scores for your geographical region.
- Prioritize keywords in the list in terms of how important these topics are to your business and goals.
- Then you'll be able to focus on writing topics and creating content around your list of priority keywords.

The creative brief

A **creative brief** is an important aid to getting your content marketing right from the beginning.

It will allow you to identify the most important insights and understandings that will inform your creative outputs, be they blog posts, e-books, or Instagram stories. You can get insights for your content from the different types of research that you've been doing for your strategy on personas, competitors, and the general industry landscape and keywords.

Writing a creative brief will challenge you to distill your insights into a document of usable actions that your creative and content teams can follow. It will act as a set of clear instructions for content development to work towards your objectives.

Benefits of a creative brief

You'll see some real benefits from sitting down and writing a brief, like:

- Developing a better understanding of your audience, goals, and campaign idea
- Teasing out the nuances of the campaign
- Developing consistent engaging messaging across all channels and formats
- Using time with writers and designers more efficiently
- Using your budget more efficiently by minimizing the number of amendments and rebriefs

Key steps

Always keep in mind your overall content strategy when you're writing a creative brief. Consider these steps.

- What is the campaign idea, and what are you hoping to achieve with your campaign?
- What do you want the audience to do or feel when they see the campaign?
- Describe your audience, i.e., buyer personas.
- What's your brand personality and story?
- What channels will be used in the campaign?
- What are the formats and sizes required?
- What's the budget?
- What's the deadline?
- Are there any other mandatory elements to be included like logo or legal disclaimer, etc.?

The brief you write will be the final output before you produce any content, and it will help you deliver on your objectives in line with your brand and company identity.

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

You'll need to include a number of research elements to complete a well-developed brief. Some research elements and insights contained in a creative brief include personas, and customer insights, social listening, competitor analysis, keyword research, audit of your current content library.

WALKTHROUGH: KEYWORD RESEARCH FOR CONTENT IDEAS

To get content ideas:

- Anticipate the type of questions your consumers ask Google.
- Create the content that answers these questions.
- Position your product as the solution.

You can use Moz to conduct keyword research:

- In Moz, navigate to **Moz Pro** and then **Keyword Explorer.**
- Enter a keyword.
- Click Analyze.
- The monthly volume, difficulty, organic CTR, and priority are revealed for that keyword.
- In the **Keyword Suggestions** area, select **See all suggestions** in relation to your chosen keyword.
- A list of all keyword suggestions is revealed – this gives you an idea of what people are actively searching for.
- Adjust the search volume, so your data gets a minimum number of searches per month.
- In the **Display keyword suggestions that** drop-down menu, select **are questions** and adjust the search volume.
- A list of questions that relate to your keyword appears.
- Analyze the list and look for interesting content topics.
- Fill your website with this content so when people search, you are likely to show up as the solution to their query.
- Repurpose your content and share on social media and email.

BRAND STORYTELLING

What is a brand?

What exactly is a **brand**? This applies to both B2C consumer brands, and how companies view services and products in the B2B world.

For companies and organizations, your brand is many things. It can be:

- The commercial and the non-commercial actions you do as a company
- The stories your customers and communities create around your mission
- Your customer service and how you relate to your customers
- The experiences every single person has with your company, in every channel
- The image and style associated with your company

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

Having a strong **brand purpose** means that you stand out in the market with content that's unique and recognizable, content that connects with your audience in a meaningful way. And ideally, helps form a relationship with them.

What is brand storytelling?

Brand storytelling is a marketing competency that drives engagement at an emotional level.

This results in improved business performance through communicating engaging and memorable stories about your business with your target audience. It's a way of connecting with people who share your values and your beliefs and builds a personality for your company. It invites others into your community and embraces them in an authentic way.

Why are brand stories valuable? Stories are up to 22 times more memorable than facts and figures. And brain activity increases to five times higher when a person is consuming information through a story. Storytelling is a very powerful tool for creating meaningful, relatable engagement with your audience.

Understand the value a brand story brings to your content marketing strategy:

- It helps your credibility.
- It will highlight your authenticity.
- It will support you in any times of crisis.

Key considerations

Here are some helpful steps to create great content with brand storytelling:

- Know who you are.
- Understand your goals.
- Find your story.
- Identify your audience's knowledge level.
- Map your story elements to the personas you researched.
- Craft your story.
- Share your story.
- Engage with your communities.

And here's a handy checklist for identifying your brand's story:

- Focus on the audience and their needs.
- Stick to a single message in the narrative.
- Use facts appropriately.
- Create characters in the story who reflect your audience.
- Develop dramatic tension in your 'plot' where possible, like: what's next, and how will it end?
- Structure your story, so that it's easier to understand. In other words, introduce the problem, show or describe how your characters deal with the problem, and showcase the resolution.

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

DEFINING YOUR PERSONALITY

Brand personality

Regardless of whether you're working in the business-to-consumer (B2C) or the business-to-business (B2B) space, every company or business has a brand personality.

People don't like thinking of brands as cold, unfriendly businesses. They like to see brands as people with a story to tell, and certainly having the why behind what you're selling and being able to act with authenticity and a personality will help you resonate with consumers.

Categories

There are three categories of content that will enhance or fill out your particular brand personality.

- **Functional:** This is purely fact-based content that's not very emotive. This is a strong driver of action-based content and is directly related to the business or brand. It's the hard sell. This includes announcements or news items.
- **Emotional:** This is the realm where you tap into the human experience and show a personality that allows consumers to relate to your business. This includes user testimonials, videos, and information about how your brand or product benefits and impacts the lives of your customers.
- **Essential:** This is the absolute bare minimum amount of information that a consumer needs to know about what you're selling to interact with your business. This includes things like prices or contact information, which people will need to help them make a decision to buy or engage with your business.

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

NOTES

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

LESSON 4: CREATING AND CURATING CONTENT

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

CONTENT CREATION

What is it?

When you've completed your research, developed personas, defined your brand personality, and written your creative brief, it's time to turn these insights into **content**.

Content creation is a process of generating varying formats of collateral that serve the needs of your content strategy objectives. They will serve these objectives and amplify your brand personality by engaging your buyer personas in a way that helps build your brand or company's authority and creditability, and is useful for connecting your target audience with your brand or business.

Being creative

How creative do you have to be with your content? Content development should be guided by audience, competitor, and keyword research, but it's important that there's room for that creative spark to add color and personality to your findings and bring the content to life.

Key steps

You should complete these steps as you go through your creative process:

1. Think about and absorb the research and information you've gained.
2. Brainstorm some ideas and identify themes.
3. Take a break and do something else. Leave the idea alone for a while.
4. Return to your idea and critique or validate it in terms of your objectives, audience, and strategy.
5. Create prototypes where possible to explore and test your content in in its simplest form before investing anymore time in it.
6. Create your content.

CONTENT TYPES

Formats

There are many content types and formats that content marketers can use in their content marketing mix.

- **White papers** are a great knowledge sharing resource that can help you build thought leadership and credibility within your industry. They're a strong lead generation tool and can also be a great awareness tool.
- **Ebooks** are often shorter and a lot more interactive than white papers. They generally focus on multimedia content and 'how-to' guides, rather than thought leadership pieces. Ebook formats are more likely to be read as they contain functional benefits that businesses can implement immediately.
- **Infographics** allow you to take large sets of data and turn them into an interesting visual story. Look towards user research, customer data, or information from a historical context in terms of the impact your business has had to create interesting infographics.
- **Blogging** is an effective tool that allows businesses to journal their activity through the forms of text and imagery. A blog usually sits on a company website and allows you to create a great structure that drives search engine ranking. Case studies are often featured as topics

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

within blog posts. These are evergreen pieces of content, but they can also develop thought leadership and credibility with your potential customers.

- **Interactive content** encourages users to take an action and interact with your page within a social space. Interactive content delivers over 500% more engagement than static posts in the newsfeed. Interactive content formats include images, video, click-through, and polls.
- **Videos** are the number one content format on the web, with the majority of video being viewed on mobile. Audience attention rates are short and there is a lot of competition online, so make sure that you're creating short, sharable, bite-sized videos that will capture the attention of your audience. Video formats include ephemeral, live, short-form, and social TV.
- **Articles** are long-form social posts that work to build thought leadership and demonstrate expertise in a particular area. You can post articles to a blog or to certain social media sites. Articles focus on a specific topic or theme to drive conversation and engagement and usually include images, video, and CTAs along with text and sometimes other media. Engage with comments on articles to continue to display your credibility and expertise in the subject area.
- **Templates and checklists** can be useful content formats for seeding content to your potential customers. These allow you to build credibility, help solve a pain point, and add real true effort to help your audience.
- **Webinars** are web-based seminars that provide you with an opportunity to connect to your audience in a human way by putting a face or voice to your offering. Theme your webinars on a specific area of your expertise and use visual aids such as videos, animations, or slide decks to talk the audience through solving their business needs or to educate them in a specialized area.
- **Podcasts** are audio recordings that users can listen to on smartphone apps or through audio streaming services. Types of podcasts include interviews, conversations, reviews, storytelling, show recordings, and Q&A. When you're creating a podcast, make sure that you have a good quality recording set up and focus on a single theme. If you plan to record a series of podcasts, it is good practice to follow a clear structure that will be used consistently across episodes so listeners know what to expect.

Benefits of having a content mix

The benefits of using a variety of content types and formats in your content marketing include:

- Increasing brand awareness
- Developing thought leadership
- Generating excitement and advocacy
- Reaching wider audiences

Best practice for content creation

What are some best practice guidelines when it comes to validating or critiquing your content?

Here is a checklist for content creation:

- Does it provide utility to your audience?
- Is it fit for the platform you're publishing on?
- Can you measure the effect of the content?
- Is it consistent in appearance and style with your brand?
- Is it aligned with your business goals?

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

Sharing content

Understanding why users share your content will help you to create more effective and sharable content. The four most common motivations that drive users to share your content are:

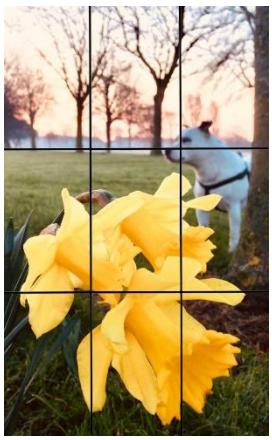
- **Incentives** – when people like and share in return for something
- **Fame** – when people want to be the first person to share this content
- **Utility** – when people believe the content will be helpful or useful to their friends and connections
- **Topicality and trends** – when people want to show that they are up to date with current developments

Images

You'll need to create good quality **images** to compete with other brands also vying for your audience's attention.

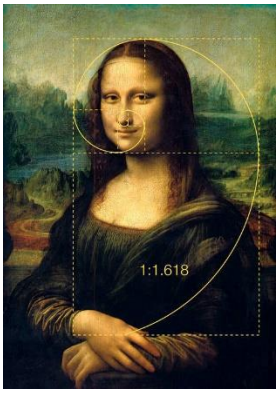
Here are some good practices to follow when creating image content:

- Use simple, clear images – don't clutter them with multiple subjects.
- Use dominant colors – just one or two in general.
- Add copy beside or directly into the image that develops the story or helps drive action towards your goal
- Frame the image well, and try not to cut off parts of the subject unless it's intentional.
- Use the rule of thirds as a means of composing your image by dividing your image into a grid of 9 squares. Standard practice is to have the most important element of the image in the center of the grid.



- Consider the golden ratio where the size relationship of a smaller segment to a larger segment is the same as the size relationship between the larger segment and the sum of the smaller and larger segment.

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com



- Take time over CTAs and don't be afraid to A/B test or experiment.

Infographics

Infographics are a great way to present a large amount of data in a visual way that is easy to read and quick to share. Here are some tips for creating infographics:

- Consider your flow.
- Understand that statistics and copy can be made visual. Consider font choices as a key element of the visual design.
- Take the viewer on a journey towards a final piece of information.
- Pepper the journey with mini 'pay offs' like interesting stats, stories, facts, and animations.
- Keep your infographic on brand so that if you share it public across channels, your audience can easily identify it as your content.

Video

Video is one of the most popular content formats and will play a key role in your content strategy. What are the types of video content formats available to content producers?

- High quality video production, corporate videos, TV, and online commercials
    - Involves expensive cameras, lighting, sound, and post-production equipment

- Low budget native social and live formats
    - Involves smartphones, webcams, and lower cost production and post-production equipment

Best practices

The following best practices will enhance your video content offering:

- Tell viewers what your video is about within the first 3–5 seconds – for example, an impactful establishing shot, or title.
- Understand the importance of location.
- Consider the tone and accent of the VO used.
- Consider the shape of your video: portrait, landscape, square video. (This can depend on the device that people typically use to consume the content, for example, mobile viewers prefer portrait or vertical videos as this is how they look at their phones.)
- Use closed captions for 'sound-off' video views.
- Consider high impact special shots if appropriate: drones, mounted cameras, GoPros, and so on.

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

- Understand the importance of 'Watch Next' video content to keep users engaged.

Headline writing

Headline writing is a creative process and writers can choose to include some or all of the tips from this list in their headline outputs:

- Focus on the needs of the reader - show how you will solve their problem.
- Be specific, include numbers or percentages where appropriate.
- Put your most important words towards the beginning.
- Drive urgency- hint towards the interesting content of the piece.
- Write your headline for people to engage on a human level.
- Use a tool like CoSchedule Headline Analyzer to analyze your headlines.
- For SEO, Consider the five Ws (Who? What? When? Where? Why?) from the consumer's point of view.

Best practices for writing content

What are some best practices for **writing content**? Here are some points to consider when writing blogs, articles or long-form copy:

- Chunk your copy into short digestible paragraphs.
- Use sub-headers to make content skimmable. (Everyone skim-reads online when seeking information.)
- Break up long pieces of text with relevant images and video.
- Don't be afraid to go into depth - some of the best ranking knowledge-based pages are several thousand words long. If this is the case, use a simple table at the beginning of the article with clickable anchor links straight to sections.

While there are many best practices for writing copy, it's always worth referring to George Orwell's guide to writing:

- Never use a commonly used metaphor, simile, or other figure of speech (clichés).
- Never use a long word where a short one will do.
- If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out.
- Never use the passive where you can use the active.
- Never use a jargon word if you can think of an everyday equivalent.

Blogs

Take the following steps to increase traffic to your **blog**:

- Write and publish on your blog regularly and consistently.
- Use SEO keyword research as a guide to identifying topics to write about.
- Note the importance of specific questions as a means for searching online.
- Optimize page titles, page headings, and body content for SEO.
- Create longer form evergreen content, that is, content that isn't time dependent and won't get old
- Write short-form pieces about current trends and topics.
- Choose themes that are useful to people to help you become an authority and resource.
- Look at the performance of existing content to gauge what your audience responds to and see if you can look at it from a different angle.

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

- Comment and engage with other people's blogs to generate awareness of your blog and goodwill from the other bloggers and their communities who may check out your blog or share your social posts.
- Create the best piece of content by far to answer the question you've identified as being in the mind of your target audience.

CONTENT CURATION

What is it?

Content curation is using or sharing other people's or third-party content as part of your content strategy. It's a quick, easy, low-cost, and a high-impact use of content marketing when done correctly.

Benefits

Content curation has many benefits for content producers:

- You'll appear less promotional.
- It may make your audience like you more.
- It will generate goodwill overall.
- You'll develop relationships with publications and companies with similar audiences.
- You can position your company as an industry leader.
- You can connect with the original creator.

Types of curation

There are four main types of curated content:

- **Aggregation** means curating the most relevant content about a topic into a single piece or viewpoint. This is the most common form of curation, and the basis of most content curations services available for use or purchase.
- **Distillation** takes the overall 'noise' about a topic and reduces it to its core concept. The best cases of social content curation can be catalogued into this definition.
- **Mashups** merge different content about a topic to create a new original point of view.
- **Chronology** is historiographical content curation. Typically, this method consists of presenting a timeline of curated information to show the evolution of a specific topic.

Finding content

When you want to share content, the first place to start is to look at your own social channels. If you don't already follow brands that are related to your products or services, it's worth following them on social media to find shareable content more easily, as well as to keep up with what is trending in your industry.

You can also search on Google or use tools like Buzzsumo and focus on the topics or industries that you want to share content from to find good quality shareable content. Always make sure that you have permission to share the content you share and that you clearly credit the content creator.

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

Curation versus creation

What is the difference between content curation and content creation?

Content Curation

This:

- Involves using third-party content
- You can add your own commentary to the curated content
- Lower resource investment: it takes less time and money because the content already exists
- Limited ownership: you need to credit the original source
- Community input: there is great potential to engage your community with the content

Content Creation

These are the characteristics of content creation:

- **Original content:** It is unique to your brand or product.
- **Higher resource investment:** It takes more money and time to produce.
- **100% ownership:** You have full control of the content.
- **Credibility:** As it is original and controlled, there's greater credibility with online audiences.

WALKTHROUGH: LINKEDIN COMPANY PAGE CONTENT CURATION

You can use LinkedIn's content curation feature to share content from your company page.

- On your company page, navigate to the **Content** section.
- In the **Industry** area, select the industry, location, and job function you want to get results from.
- Review the content topics that appear.
- Share topics from your page by clicking the Share button beside each topic.

CONTENT REPURPOSING

What is it?

You can repurpose content into different formats to maximize its use.

Repurposing it means you adapt it or break it up to use for another purpose, such as taking an infographic and turning it into a number of individual images, each of which could be used in single social media posts or added to an email.

Benefits

There are many benefits to repurposing your content:

- **Speed:** It saves time as it's quicker than creating new content from scratch.
- **Low cost:** It's more cost-effective to reuse something than to purchase or commission new content.

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

- **Efficient:** If you've already spent time and money in researching and interviewing for a blog post, for example, and then writing it up, adding images, strategize social media posts, then you should reuse that effort and good content as much as you can. Break up elements of it into tweets, spark a discussion about it on LinkedIn, turn it into a podcast, create an auto-generated video of it by using a tool like lumen5.com.
- **Reinforcements:** If content appears in more than one place, then it reinforces the message that you want to make. In short, if you have good evergreen content, always look for opportunities to maximize and reuse it and to save yourself some time.

Key considerations

There are some points to take into consideration when repurposing content.

- Be aware of **video aspect ratios** and length requirements.
- Understand what works best on **different platforms**. For example, a video on LinkedIn looks and has a different context to an Instagram story. You can articulate the same idea very differently to suit the platform.
- When using auto-generation tools, aim to keep the content reasonably **on-brand** when using templates.
- **Stagger content publishing** for different times and days to reach audiences and platforms at relevant times, and to reach other time zones.
- Be aware of how **text descriptions** vary across platforms and don't just replicate them blindly. People use hashtags differently and have different app usernames across different social apps.

CONTENT PERSONALIZATION

What is it?

Content personalization is a powerful process of using different content at different stages of the buying process to be fully relevant to the right user at the right time. This is especially relevant to B2B organizations where the buying process is longer or more complicated and deals tend to happen between individuals and companies. So, personalizing content to the individual buyers and stakeholders is essential.

Benefits

The benefits of personalizing your content include:

- Targeting the right people in the relevant platforms and in the right context
- Increasing your conversion rates
- Improving brand affinity across platforms

How can you give your content that personal touch?

Follow these steps to give you content a personal touch:

- **Research:** Do your research around your audience segments and understand their consumer journey. Make sure you're leveraging as much consumer data as possible. Are they on your website? Have they looked at a newsletter that you've sent them?

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

- **Target:** Target your messaging. Make sure you're getting them on the right platforms, the right channels at the right time and with the appropriate message.
- **Measure:** Make sure to measure and analyze what you do.

CONTENT CALENDARS

What are they?

Content calendars are an essential tool for all content marketers. A content calendar is a centralized document that is used to plan content across multiple platforms and themes.

Benefits

There are many benefits of using a content calendar.

- It helps you **plan your content** efficiently.
- Keeps the team **focused and organized**.
- Helps **prevent delays** caused by writer's block.
- It **allows key dates** for functional messaging and topical content.
- It **keeps social content on track** across multiple platforms and realigns aim or strategy.

Elements

A complete content calendar will contain the following elements:

- **Copy:** the text or narrative that goes with your post
- **Creative:** the image, video, gif, poll or format that accompanies your copy
- **Theme:** who this content is for – the purpose, pain point, or audience interest the content is serving
- **Date and time:** when the post will be published and the length of time it will be promoted for
- **Platform:** how the content will be published and where

Key considerations

There are some key points to consider when creating a content calendar:

- Theming your content around the time of year (topical and cultural events)- for example, New Year's Day, Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day, spring, summer, the school year, exams, BBQ season, bank holidays and so on.
- Business priorities, timelines, and product launches
- Other marketing activities, PR, and traditional advertising activities
- Sponsorship activity
- In-store promotions

CONTENT PLATFORMS

It's so important to think carefully about how content will appear on a different platform, or social media channel. Both its format and in the messaging and intention.

Audience mindsets change across platforms, in other words, people react to, and engage with, content in different ways. Discussions can break out on a Facebook post in a way they don't in a LinkedIn article.

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

Be careful about formats and tone – a long blog post with video snippets might not work well in an email newsletter.

Think about what your content elicits and leads people to do. Can they act on it, for example click through to a website? On Twitter they can click a link instantly, but they can't click through on non-paid Instagram.

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

NOTES

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

LESSON 5: PUBLISHING AND DISTRIBUTING CONTENT

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

CONTENT SEEDING

What is it?

A good content strategy will involve content creation at its heart. What you do with that content, and getting it to your intended audience, is what we'll look at in content seeding.

Content seeding is a strategic approach to publishing your content across the entire web so that it is seen by an audience who will positively engage with it. This can be achieved by publishing your content on key platforms where it will be picked up and distributed by social influencers, content producers or publications. Optimizing your content per platform is a key consideration so that you avoid overlap as much as possible.

Benefits

Content seeding is valuable to marketers and organizations in many ways:

- **Reach:** It allows you to reach a much wider audience with your message.
- **Relevancy:** By leveraging third parties, you can ensure your content and brand messaging is seen by the right audience.
- **Credibility:** You can build your brand credibility through influencer distribution of your content, positioning your brand as a key player in your industry.

Steps for seeding content

Here are the steps for seeding content to be picked up by influencers:

- **Social listening:** Use social listening to engage with your audience and become familiar with the content and influencers that resonate with them most.
- **Identify influencers:** Identify influencers to target based on their following and expertise. Use software like Klear, Buzzsumo, Followerwonk, or Brandwatch.
- **Connect:** Connect with influencers using:
  - Hashtags
  - Introductions through shared connections or colleagues
  - Reach out via email or contact them directly on social media

CONTENT SCHEDULING

Content scheduling is the method by which content is uploaded for future publishing.

Types of scheduling

There are two main ways you can schedule your content for publishing.

- **Native scheduling:** This is a method of publishing content that uses a social platform's own upload function. For example, Twitter Studio or Facebook Publishing Tools.
- **Third-party applications:** Tools like Buffer, Hootsuite, and Sprout Social are used by validating logins for your platforms and scheduling or spreading content across multiple platforms through the single hub.

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

Benefits

Why do content marketers schedule their content?

- **Time efficient**: Scheduling a large amount of content in one sitting allows for time spent on other activities.
- **Cross-posting**: Some third-party tools let you schedule content to multiple platforms with a single click from their integrated approach. A word of caution here. You should never cross-post automatically without planning for each platform and thinking ahead. Specifications for images, videos, and copy vary between platforms. Usernames and hashtags can also differ. Cross-posting without thinking shows the audience you're not really building a community, but just putting content out there without thinking about why you are doing it.

Note: It's also important not to post too far in advance, in case something changes in the world or the market, and your scheduled post might seem insensitive or inappropriate. Keep track of scheduled posts and make sure that you or another team member always have access to edit or remove a post at short notice.

CONTENT PROMOTION

What is it?

Content promotion is defined as the strategic approach to getting your content seen by a wider audience than your immediate own channels.

This applies to both the earned and paid space.

Paid methods

- **Paid media and advertising:** These are paid content promotion campaigns, such as LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and so on.
- **Influencer marketing:** Here, you need to consider the benefits of using influences, identify the right influences, co-create content with influencers, understand how to measure influencer marketing, and guideline compliance as well as influencer contract considerations.
- **Affiliate marketing:** This includes paid third-party blogs or publications that produce content that drives engagement with your brand and traffic to your website with the intention of converting this traffic into leads or sales for a fee, usually paid as a commission per lead or a percentage of the sale value.

Unpaid methods

- **Owned media channels:** These include your website and your blog, your email list, your company's social media channels and so on. Non-paid or organic reach is limited on social channels, but a popular blog on your website and well-subscribed email list are effective ways to promote your content.
- **Hashtags and tagging:** These allow you to join conversations or categorize your content relevant to your audience and theme.
- **Guest blogging and takeovers:** Consider extending the reach of your content by writing a piece for another publication, company, or influencer.
- **Interviews or Q&A:** Interviews conducted on the basis of outreach or a press release can promote your content to a wider audience and be repurposed in many ways.

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT

An important complement

Community management is the stage that comes after content has been published. It involves engaging with and handling complaints or feedback on your content, brand, and organization to drive better customer relationships.

Why is it important?

In order for your content marketing strategy to succeed, community management is key:

- You can **manage negative experiences** with your business and turn them into positive solutions.
- You can **respond to business queries** and help drive sales, leads, and conversions.
- You'll **gain insights** about your business from real people in real time and adjust if needed.
- You'll **find opportunities to network** with like-minded businesses or influencers.
- Ultimately, this will all **drive new sales** and repeat business.

Methods

How do you do this? Use social listening to pay attention to what people are saying to you about you and to others online.

You might be surprised when and where people will engage with you and spark a relationship. A small comment in an Instagram post could lead to someone becoming an eventual brand ambassador.

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

NOTES

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

LESSON 6: METRICS AND CONTENT MARKETING

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

CONTENT MARKETING KPI MEASUREMENT

Value of KPI measurement

Measuring what you do is, of course, a vital part of your digital marketing strategy. It's important for both B2B and B2C marketing.

Measuring the success of your content marketing efforts shows the value of your work in terms of how it has achieved KPIs you've set for the activity.

Benefits of measuring content

Measuring your content marketing efforts can help:

- Justify spend and resource allocation.
- Provide learnings for future campaigns.
- Unearth unexpected insights.
- Create a valuable roadmap on how to produce a content strategy.
- Clarify topics and themes that resonate with an audience.

CAMPAIGN METRICS

While specific metrics are associated with measuring successful content marketing campaigns, we in general have:

- engagement metrics
- conversion metrics

Engagement metrics

Engagement metrics include:

- higher average time on site, reduced bounce rates
- increased numbers of returning visitors
- more pages viewed per session
- scroll depth, for example, 50% of users get to the end of a blog
- growth in discovery through organic search or social visitors
- increased number of people searching for your brand
- higher channel engagement metrics, for example, social shares, email opens, brand mentions, and more links to your content, which is good for long-term SEO, and so on

Conversion metrics

Conversion metrics include:

- higher number of goals achieved
- increased conversion rate
- shorter path to purchase
- reduced cost per sale or lead

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

ANALYZING CONTENT PERFORMANCE

Choosing metrics

Follow these steps when choosing metrics:

- **Begin with your objective:** Was it an awareness or conversion objective?
- **Choose the appropriate metric set:** Choose one to report on your campaign. For example, if your objective is to increase brand engagement on your blog by 10% in 3 months, you'd look at metrics like increased session length on blog pages, high return visitors to the blog, or changes in email newsletter subscribers to determine if your new content themes are resonating better with your target audience.
- **Look for changes:** Examine these metrics before the campaign started, during the campaign itself, and after the campaign has concluded, to see if there are changes, either positive or negative, in relation to these metrics to help unearth trends and demonstrate the value of your content strategy.

Steps to derive insights

Follow these steps to derive insights from your content's activity:

1. **Choose the metrics** you want to measure. These could be conversion, awareness, and so on.
2. **Group the metrics** for your themes and formats together in a table in Excel or equivalent. Put your themes and formats in the left-hand columns of your table and your metrics in the right-hand columns.
3. **Examine the performance** of the content. Was there a particular theme or format that performed above or below the campaign average for those metrics?
4. **Dig deeper** for insights. When you've identified the best performing themes and formats, dig deeper to see what the best performing channels for distribution were – for example, social media or SEO. This will help you decide on which channels to optimize in future campaigns.
5. **Examine the elements** to see what worked best. Look into your data to see if any content elements like images or headlines were particularly effective. This can help you identify ways to reproduce compelling headlines or images, for instance, going forward.
6. **Examine the times** to see when content performs best. Note the best performing times and days which can help with future content scheduling. The purpose of measuring the performance of your content is to gain value from it.

Determining return on investment (ROI)

How can you determine return on investment (ROI) from your content marketing efforts?

When you've looked at the metrics related to your objective, it's important to understand the cost of producing these metrics. In other words, divide your most important metric improvements by the cost of the campaign.

It's simple enough to work out the ROI and other valuable return on spend metrics.

1. **Look at the weeks prior** to your campaign and set these as benchmark metrics.

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

2. **Subtract these benchmark metrics** from your campaign metrics to see the actual increase. For example: How many new visitors did you drive versus the benchmark? How many workable leads were generated? Was there an increase in revenue?
3. **Divide the campaign spend by the increased metrics**. This will give you metrics such as cost per new engagement, cost per new conversion, and cost per increased brand search.
4. **Determine the value.** You can create your own metrics to show the value of your activity, simply by seeing what changed, noting the change, and then dividing the spend by the increased metrics.
5. **Use simple language.** When creating metrics for non-analysts or non-digital people, use simple language. For example, say, 'increase in people looking for our brand on Google' rather than 'higher brand searches', or 'cost per new visitor to the website' rather than 'cost per incremental user'.

Presenting the findings

How do you create a report to show all this information?

Here are the elements you should include in your content marketing report:

- All content that was produced and the cost and campaign metrics associated with these costs
- Overall performance versus KPI or objective.
- What worked, headlines, channels, times of day. Show the metrics and anything else that's relevant.
- What was less effective, for example, formats, messaging, and so on.
- A summary of the insights you've derived from the data.
- What would you recommend for the next campaign based on the data?

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

NOTES

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

LESSON 7: ENHANCING YOUR CREATIVITY

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

GENERATING NEW IDEAS

Thinking creatively

The ability to be creative, and to think creatively, is an invaluable skill in today's workplace. It can lead to the development of new products and services, and optimizing business processes. It can lead to marketing campaigns that stand out and really catch the customer's attention. And, down the line, it can lead to business growth and increased revenues.

Anyone can be creative. However, it's important to remember that creative thinking doesn't happen by accident, and it doesn't occur in a vacuum. It's a skill that needs to be consciously applied, honed, and practiced. When practiced successfully, it can reveal effective and innovative solutions to various types of problems, from marketing communications to operational roadblocks, and it can generate new ideas.

Creative thinking stages

Stage 1: Prepare

In this stage, you research whatever problem you are faced with. Say, for example, you are tasked with promoting a new product line, but aren't sure what direction to take. Researching this problem might involve doing a factory tour, and reading as much as you can about the product, audience, market, and competitors.

Further your research by reviewing solutions to similar problems. These could be case studies, advertising tag lines, or campaigns. Try to learn and understand as much as you can about the audience, the product, or the problem you are trying to solve. Observe how and why a product is used or might be used. Ask, who are the people who might use it, what are their motivations for using it, why is it useful to them? Find out as much as you can. Immerse yourself in the details.

Stage 2: Incubate

In this stage, you incubate the findings of your research and let them simmer. Start by taking some time to write down exactly what you are trying to achieve and everything you discovered from your research. Read it, then leave it for a while. When you go back, try writing it another way. Then let go again, and let your mind wander: take a walk, take a bath, read, daydream. In short, do something else.

Stage 3: Illuminate

This is the 'eureka' stage when all the elements you've been mulling over in the previous stage connect together in your subconscious, and an idea forms in your conscious mind. Write your idea down. Remember the mantra, 'write it straight, then write it great'. Just concentrate on getting the idea down on paper so you don't forget it. Once you've safely written it down, leave it alone.

Stage 4: Verify

At this stage, go back to your idea and sense check it against the original problem and verify that it is the correct approach. Critically assess whether it satisfies all elements of the problem you are solving. Ask, will it solve the problem in such a way to give me the result I need? For example, will this

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

slogan drive awareness of my brand? Is the tone right for the audience or market? Will team operations work more efficiently if this solution is introduced? Ask, what are the various outcomes we could expect if we went ahead with this idea? How might the audience engage with the campaign or how would the team adopt this new process?

If, after asking yourself these types of questions, you find that your idea doesn't solve the original problem, put it aside. Holding on to it could take you down the wrong path and stop you from finding other, possibly better, ideas. It's better to work on your next idea instead.

Once you've settled on an idea, consider: you've written it straight, now it's time to write it great. So take some time to craft and refine the idea, so it can be effectively understood and internalized by your stakeholders – or whoever has the final say on your idea.

Stage 5: Practice

This is where you practice generating ideas using the five-stage process. The more ideas you generate using this process, the faster you get at coming up with better solutions. This, in turn, can help you discount poor ideas early on and reduce the amount of time that's wasted in following paths of enquiry that lead to dead ends, or are likely to drive less effective ideas. Practice also helps to focus the way you approach problems. As the process gets more familiar, it can help to naturalize creativity in your thinking.

REMOVING BARRIERS TO CREATIVITY

Barriers

Successful creative thinking requires you to be aware of the barriers which may weaken your creativity, and prevent you from coming up with innovative ideas and finding great new solutions to problems. One of the most common barriers to creativity is fear of failure. This barrier might stop you putting ideas out there, in case someone laughs at them or even ridicules you for coming up with such crazy thoughts.

Another common barrier to creativity is relying too much on old ideas and established ways of thinking. This might be due to simple laziness on your part, or it could be that you are operating in an environment that puts too much emphasis on maintaining the status quo. To overcome these kinds of barriers, it is essential that you begin to 'think outside the box', travel down roads you are not used to, move out of your comfort zone, and abandon familiar practices. Luckily, there are tactics you can use to help you eliminate the typical barriers to creativity you may encounter.

Tactics to remove barriers

Tactic 1: Challenge your biases and preconceptions

A bias is an inclination towards one way of thinking. Having a bias means you lean in a certain direction from the outset. You tend to believe what you want to believe, and are reluctant to take other people's opinions into consideration. This can obviously have a negative impact on your creative thinking.

To overcome this barrier, it is important to examine any problems you are faced with from many angles. To begin, assume your understanding of the problem is correct. Now, assume your understanding is incorrect – what does this mean? Then, view the problem from the perspective of a

third party; how would someone else view the problem? When you do this, you may find that the nature of the problem you are trying to solve has changed – opening up the possibility of many different solutions.

Tactic 2: Use different thought processes to generate ideas and solutions

Avoid over-using the same old thought process you have always used. A thought process is the way ideas suggest other ideas to you in a sequence. First, get familiar with the thought process you typically use yourself. It may be that you are a highly analytical thinker, or perhaps you are more instinctual or intuitive.

When you have figured out how you naturally tend to think, start to observe how other people think. Choose a suitable third party whose thinking you are familiar with, and apply their thought process to your task or problem. Ask how would that person tackle this problem or what would they do in this situation? This frees you up to think like someone else, which can help you explore new lines of enquiry on a particular problem and come up with innovative solutions. Using this approach, you can also develop scenarios for how your idea might be received by different stakeholders down the line, and prepare responses that drive towards a suitable solution.

Tactic 3: Avoid 'Functional Fixity'

'Functional Fixity' is the inability to look beyond how an object works or is designed to function. With this way of thinking, spoons can only be used to stir or drink liquids – but never to spread butter; or paperclips can only be used to fix sheets of paper together – but not to collect magnets or open locks. By being aware of 'Functional Fixity', and the danger this approach holds for creative thinkers, it can open your mind to new ways of looking at, and using, objects. This can have a positive impact on your creative mind, and can drive you further in your quest for creative solutions.

Tactic 4: Change your daily routine

Doing the same thing every day, over and over again, can have a detrimental effect on your creativity. The changes you make don't have to be dramatic, as even small changes can shake things up and lead to a burst of creativity. For example, try changing where you work a couple of times each week. This might mean working in a conference room instead of at your desk, or in a coffee shop around the corner. Even if you are doing the same work, doing it in new surroundings can help you discover things you may have overlooked, or see problems in a different light.

You could also try changing the order in which you tackle your work every day. So if you usually leave your most important tasks until the afternoon, try doing them in the morning instead. Alternatively, try working at a different time of day, if that's possible, or even changing the agenda or format of regular meetings. Once you have tried out a few new routines, maintain the ones that are working for you. But remember to change things up again when your creativity next takes a dip.

Tactic 5: Take creative risks

It takes courage to be the first person to think of an idea or a new solution. You can't be sure if it will work, or be accepted, or even if people will find it ridiculous. Nevertheless, the ability to take risks goes hand in hand with innovation and problem solving. So be brave, put your ideas out there, and keep looking at new ways of doing things and of overcoming barriers to creativity.

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

PERSEVERING WHEN YOUR IDEAS FAIL

Importance of persevering

Sometimes an idea just isn't as good as you think it is. It may fail when you put it into practice, or it might be rejected before you have even finished presenting it. If your idea is rejected by your boss or by other stakeholders, it can be embarrassing. However, it is important not to get disheartened or to give up. Instead, you need to be resilient, persevere, and bounce right back. You can do this by shifting your focus and coming up with another solution that is acceptable to all involved and minimizes the risk of straining relationships.

Overcoming rejection

Remember, rejection is never easy. So when an idea is rejected, the first thing you should do is stop and pause. Don't react rashly or quickly. Don't run from the room. And don't sigh audibly. Instead, compose yourself by lightly exhaling. Take a drink of water to help reduce stress and defensiveness. Above all, remain calm.

As well as giving you time to compose yourself, pausing in this way also gives space to the person who rejected your idea to offer more information or explain why they don't want to proceed with your idea. As the focus now moves away from you and towards the rejector, they may feel obliged to justify their skepticism. This can help you refocus your thinking and come up with alternative solutions.

Try to see the objections as requests for clarity or for more information. So, for example, if someone says, "I don't like that advertising tag line you've come up with", you could reframe this objection as, "Can you help me see how our audience might connect with this phrase?" By reframing the objection in this way, you may find that you are able to offer additional information and clarifications that satisfy the concerns raised.

It is also a good idea to try to empathize with the person who rejected your idea. Try saying something like, "I understand why you might feel that way." This allows you to put yourself in the rejector's place and see your idea as they do. This approach also has the added benefit of helping to ease any strain that the rejection may have wrought on your relationship with that person. Moreover, you can then adapt your idea to their viewpoint, if the viewpoint is valid.

Listen to any objection that is raised and verify the objector's expertise on the subject by inquiring about their assumptions. When you respond to the objection, use facts and hard data, but don't rely on emotion. Avoid using unfounded opinions to verify your position. As Jim Barksdale, CEO of Netscape once said, "If we have data, let's look at data. If all we have are opinions, let's go with mine."

If you feel the expertise of the objector is questionable, or that they are not seeing the full picture, explain your reasoning using the word 'because'. For example, you could say, "I believe this campaign will engage our audience and drive sales because..." or, "Team efficiency and job satisfaction will improve with these changes because..." By providing valid reasons and sound arguments for your approach, you may find that you are able to win the objector over to your way of thinking.

Finally, be sure to wrap up the discussion with a motivated response to find a solution. Try asking a question like, "How do you think this idea could be improved?" Or say, "Thanks for your time and the feedback. I'll see what else I can come up with". In this way, you are ending the discussion on a

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

positive note, and are in the right frame of mind to refine your original idea or come up with a new solution that is acceptable to all stakeholders.

When an idea is rejected, you may find that you just need to make a couple of small tweaks to your original solution to get back on track; or it might mean going back to the drawing board and starting over. Either way, by using all your powers of creative thinking, it should be possible to find a great solution that solves your original problem and is acceptable to everyone – and to come out of the whole process with your working relationships still intact.

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

NOTES

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com

Copyright © 2021 digitalmarketinginstitute.com